

SNOWDON MOUNTAIN RAILWAY

TRAVELOGUE



A description of the ascent of
Snowdon by the Mountain Railway
by Peter Crew



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Front Cover: Wyddfa at Clogwyn

Photo: Clive Friend FIIP, Woodmansterne Limited

One of the great little trains of Wales

INTRODUCTION

Snowdon, 3560 ft. high, is the highest mountain peak in England and Wales. Many words of admiration and praise have been heaped upon this beautiful and complex mountain by writers since the earliest times and in this booklet we can hope to give no more than a brief introduction to the many interesting facets which the mountain has to offer. The mountain is steeped in early mythology and has always played an important part in Welsh history. Its geology and physical features, natural history and flora and fauna are all fascinating. Parts of the mountain have been torn to pieces for the extraction of its slate and valuable minerals. For nearly a century and a half Snowdon has been the focal centre in North Wales for tourism, walking and climbing. Each of these subjects warrants a book of its own, and indeed many volumes have been written. There is much to see and much to learn, and we hope that the contents of this booklet will go some of the way in helping you to appreciate this fine mountain and its surroundings.

For over two hundred years this compact area of North Wales has been called Snowdonia. This name was probably first given to the area by sailors, thus recording an early impression of the array of towering masses in their winter garb. From time immemorial the area has been known to the Welsh as Eryri, the abode of Eagles, though it is now many years since the eagle has haunted the cliffs and corries of these mountains. At the centre of the range lies Snowdon or, as the Welsh call it, Yr Wyddfa, forming the centrepiece and ultimate stronghold of these mountains. At almost every period, Snowdonia has played a crucial part in the history of Wales. The mountains have provided a refuge and retreat for the oppressed people and an ideal theatre for resistance to invasion and protection from attack. The defensive value of the mountains of Snowdonia was greatly enhanced by the fact that it had behind the fertile corn-lands of Anglesey, whose ancient name 'Mona, mam Cymru', the Mother of Wales, reflects its importance in the sustenance of the Welsh Princes. Many of the ancient myths and more recent traditions are remembered in the names of the mountains and their features, but there are more tangible manifestations in the form of fortresses and old burial places. Most of the high ground in Snowdonia consists of volcanic rocks, among the oldest known to man, which were laid down about 450 million years ago around volcanic islands in a sea which then covered much of the area which is now Wales. These rocks were subsequently folded and uplifted to form a very high range of mountains which underwent prolonged denudation; their planed off remnants were probably submerged beneath the sea. The area was again uplifted, about 20 million years ago, during the period of mountain building movements responsible for the Alps to form a plateau out of which running water and ice have carved the present mountains. Thus the shapes of the present mountains have no direct relation to those of the ancient volcanoes and what we see is due mainly to the relatively recent period of glacial action.

The mountains are not rich from the agricultural point of view. Once completely covered by dense forest, the area is now mainly rough grassland, most suitable for rearing cattle and sheep. For the botanist, however, it is a veritable paradise with its wide variation of rocks and soil types and peculiar climatic conditions. There is even a flower called the Snowdon Lily which is now only found in the darkest and most inaccessible recesses of the mountain.

The mineral wealth of the area lies mainly in deposits of copper and lead, though just to the south both silver and gold have been mined in small quantities. The copper and lead mines were worked mainly during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and there are many scars and old buildings high on the mountain acting as a silent testament to the hardiness of the old miners. Slate quarrying has been carried out on the lower slopes of the mountains since time immemorial and the vast scars now visible on the hillsides are a product of the Industrial Revolution and the organisation of the quarries into the largest undertakings of their kind in the world.

Of course, most people visit these mountains for the sake of the beautiful scenery they offer. The earliest travellers to the area were particularly attracted to Snowdon, being the



Looking back at Llanberis and Llyn Padarn. A train can be seen between Afon Hwch viaduct and the river.

highest peak, as indeed they are now. In the eighteenth century the area was difficult of access and rarely visited and we are left with several classic accounts of 'the terrifying crags and precipices'. Llanberis has always been one of the principal centres for the ascent of Snowdon, being the easiest centre of access and at the foot of the most gentle route to the summit. After the visit of Princess Victoria in 1832, who was 'exceedingly struck with the scenery of the Pass', the Royal Victoria Hotel was built giving an added boost to tourism and to the development of Llanberis. The building of the railways and, later, the roads over the passes saw the beginning of tourism as we know it and the mountains rapidly became better known and less frightening to their visitors. In this period local men were in great demand as guides and as late as 1860 one could hire a guide and a pony from Llanberis for the ascent of Snowdon for ten shillings! Even in those days, the mountain was well frequented and we are told that there were often 200 people or more who made the ascent. On one occasion the crowd on the summit was large enough for a church dignitary to preach extempore a very eloquent sermon from the summit cairn! The Snowdon Mountain Railway was built in 1894, thus firmly establishing Llanberis as the principal tourist centre of the area. The demand for, and the early success of, the mountain railway reflects the great popularity of the ascent of Snowdon, which has continued unabated to the present day.

LLANBERIS (353 ft.) to HEBRON (1069 ft.)

From the station in Llanberis we cannot see the summit of Snowdon. It is nearly 5 miles away to the South-East and hidden behind the lower flanks of the North ridge, up which the railway finds its way. The station is on the edge of Llanberis, which is a busy tourist centre in the summer months and a very quiet country town during the winter. Llanberis is dominated by the enormous excavation of the Dinorwic Slate Quarries just across the valley. These quarries were once the main industry of the area, employing over 2000 men in their heyday, but the machines are now silent with the recent closure of the quarries, due to the expense of working the slate and the lack of a modern market. It is planned to open an industrial museum in some of the old buildings and to make part of the quarry accessible for visitors, which will help to illustrate this special aspect of local life which has been so important in the past.

As the train leaves the station, we pass through the first quarter-mile of lower meadows. On the left are the Vaynol Cottages, built in 1906 for the workers of the Vaynol Estate which then owned most of this area, contrasted by the modern housing estate on the right. After a short steep rise we begin to cross the 14 arches of the Afon Hwch Viaduct, which was one of the major engineering operations during the construction of the railway. Shortly after this we come to the Upper Viaduct, with only 4 arches, which passes close by the beautiful Ceunant Mawr, or Llanberis Waterfalls, on the left. The first section of the falls is a 40 foot drop to a small platform and then a 70 foot drop into a veritable whirlpool in the depths of the gorge. When in spate these falls are an impressive sight and are well worth the short walk from the station (about 10 minutes) for a closer inspection.

Immediately after we have passed the Waterfalls we catch our first glimpse of the summit up on the left—a tiny triangular pointed peak to the right of a larger rounded summit, which appears to be higher because of the greater distance of the true summit. As the train curves round to the left onto the quieter meadows above the Waterfalls, there is a fine view back to the Dinorwic Quarries, on the lower slopes of Elidir. The white block of the Royal Victoria Hotel, with the Dolbadarn Castle behind it, is clearly visible. The castle, built on the narrow neck of land between the lakes and dominating the entrance to the Pass, dates from the sixth century and has often been of great importance in the early Welsh struggles. It was last used during the rebellion of Owen Glyndwr at the beginning of the fifteenth century, but has since fallen into disuse and only the central tower remains. At the foot of the quarry we can see the old working sheds and the large white-painted manager's house. Further to the left, in the trees overlooking Llyn Padarn, is the Old Quarry Hospital, which may eventually be converted into a restaurant associated with the quarry museum. The quarry inclines can be clearly seen. These were used to bring the slate blocks down to lake level, where the slates were cut and then taken to the coast along the lakeside railway.

The old Dinorwic quarries are now the site of the construction of the largest pumped storage power station in Europe and most of it will be hidden within the mountain. After turning the corner we pass a disused station on the left and then, almost immediately cross a small bridge over the gorge cut by the Afon Hwch. We are now progressively losing sight of the valley on the left as we pass behind the lower section of the North ridge of Snowdon. The summit is now dead ahead—the pointed craggy peak in the centre, with the round hump of Crib y Ddysgl on the left and the ridge above Clogwyn du'r Arddu on the right. The character of the hillside around us has now changed from the ordered meadows below to a haphazard scattering of houses and ruined barns. Some of these buildings still retain the name 'Hafod', signifying that it was a summer farmhouse, used when the sheep are grazing on the higher pastures. The hillside is now rough and stony, with large areas of gorse and marsh, suitable only for sheep grazing, with the occasional withered and wind-swept tree, relics of the huge forest which once covered the whole of Snowdonia. To the right we see a fine panorama of Moel Eilio, Foel Gron and Foel Goch, which dominate the right-hand skyline for the



Hebron Station, with Llyn Padarn in the background.

lower part of the ascent. These are gentle rounded hills—the name Moel or Foel means 'bald'. The train is now climbing the long straight slope towards Hebron Station, the top of which is just visible on the skyline ahead. As we rise, the view of Moel Eilio and Cwm Dwythwch on the right improves. As we near the top of this rise, we cross the old road which leads up into the bottom of Cwm Brwynog, and just over the crest Hebron Station appears immediately in front on the left.

From Hebron we have probably the finest view across to Moel Eilio and up the narrow glaciated valley which forms the 'pass' for the old track up Maesgwm, which leads over to Rhyd-Ddu in the Cwellyn valley. The proper name for the col at the head of the pass is Bwlch Maesgwm, but to the locals it is now known as 'Telegraph Col', from the poles which disfigure the landscape. Directly below Hebron we can see the old road leading into the cwm, and a disused chapel. Looking back there is a fine view of Llyn Padarn stretching into the distance and on a clear day we may see the Menai Straits and Anglesey.

HEBRON (1069 ft.) to HALFWAY (1641 ft.)

Just above Hebron we pass over the lower lip of Cwm Brwynog—'the Valley of Rushes'. This is a fine example of a glaciated valley, classically U-shaped, with a craggy ice-plucked head wall, a deep lake in the hollow below (to be seen later) and the valley filled with moraine. The end of Cwm Brwynog is dominated by the sombre cliffs of Clogwyn du'r Arddu—'the black cliff of the black height'. Up above Clogwyn du'r Arddu, the keen eyed will just be able to distinguish the hotel on the skyline, just to the right of the



The Cutting, just below Halfway Station.

summit. As we climb up alongside the cwm we can see the roof of Hafotty Newydd, the last house at the end of the road and still used for its original purpose during shearing time. Beyond Hafotty and across the valley is a fine view up Maesgwm and in the bottom of the valley the pattern of the walls can be seen, some of them a remnant of the Enclosure Acts.

From Hebron to just before Halfway the tourist track to Snowdon runs more or less parallel with the railway and on a fine day a continuous stream of walkers will be seen on the path. On the higher reaches of the mountain, the walkers often prefer to follow the railway especially in misty weather, and the driver has to keep a close watch out for them. Down on the right, by Hafotty Newydd, on a fine Saturday, there will be a large number of cars. These mostly belong to the climbers who have gone up to Clogwyn du'r Arddu, or Cloggy as they call it, one of the finest rock climbing cliffs in Britain. The climbers 'cheat' by driving as high as possible up the mountain and then following the easy gradient of the railway up to Halfway. They will often be seen in the morning, or late in the evening, with large rucksacks and coils of rope.

As the train climbs up towards Halfway we can now look into the upper part of Cwm Brwynog, towards the small pass of Bwlch Cwm Brwynog at its head. The Snowdon Ranger Path, from the Cwellyn valley, comes up to this pass from the other side and then follows the skyline above Cloggy to join the railway just before the summit. This is one of the oldest paths up Snowdon and is named after one of the famous early guides who was nicknamed 'the Snowdon Ranger'. Slowly the track steepens and curves to the right around a sharp bend and we catch a brief glimpse backwards down the valley towards



A busy day at Halfway Station! The tourist track can be seen on the hillside below.

Llanberis and to the left we can just see over the ridge to the summits of Elidir and the Glyders, on the other side of Llanberis Pass. Almost immediately the track swings back to the left and the tourist path passes through the bridge beneath us. Just above the bridge we enter the Cutting, about 20 feet or so deep. This is the only real cutting on the whole railway and is both a tribute to the skill of the builders in selecting the best route and also a reminder of the gentle approach which the mountain conveniently offers from this side. As we pass through the cutting we can see Crib y Ddysgl dead ahead, with its summit cairn just visible. Swiftly a new panorama opens. The summit of Snowdon has now temporarily disappeared as we approach nearer to the steep wall of the mountain and the way ahead seems to be completely blocked by the vertical walls of Clogwyn du'r Arddu. Over Bwlch Cwm Brwynog we can now see Moel Hebog, a peak on the other side of the Cwellyn valley—a sure indication of the height we have gained since leaving Llanberis. Soon after this we turn a little corner and reach Halfway Station. We are now some distance above the tourist path, which is now rocky and well scratched by the thousands of feet which have passed over it. On the right of the path we can see Halfway House, which is a very welcome sight for both walkers and climbers on the path. Halfway House has been in the hands of the same family for well over 90 years now, probably since it was first built. Every day during the tourist season the owner walks up from Llanberis to serve drinks and snacks to the walkers. At the height of the season he and his wife live there all week, descending to the valley only for Sundays. Over Bwlch Cwm Brwynog we can now see the little peak to the right of Moel Hebog. This is called Ogof Owain Glyndwr, after the cave on its flanks where Glyndwr is

supposed to have hid after the failure of his revolt. To the right of the col, the steep slopes lead straight to the summit of Moel Cynghorion of which we have fine views for most of the rest of the ascent. The name means 'the hill of counsels' and commemorates the last meeting of the great princes of Wales, before their surrender to Edward I. On the right-hand ridge of Moel Cynghorion, which comes down into Cwm Brwynog, is a good example of a hanging valley which was carved out by its own little glacier. Judging by its flat marshy bottom, this probably once held a shallow lake. Over the depression in the ridge to the right of this we can see the top of Mynydd Mawr, which is on the continuation ridge of Moel Hebog on the far side of the Cwellyn valley. In contrast to most of the section previously there are now few signs of civilisation to be seen. We have left the main valley far below and the hafods in the cwm are distant dots. If we look back up to the left, however, to a small break in the skyline, a large television aerial can be seen. This was erected at no little expense and some danger to ensure good reception for the inhabitants of Nant Peris in the narrow valley below.

HALFWAY (1641 ft.) to CLOGWYN (2556 ft.)

We have now gained a considerable height and the views of the hills beyond those immediately near to us are continually changing and becoming more interesting. To the right we can now see more of the Moel Hebog ridge and the top of the Beddgelert forest on its lower slopes. Beyond this we can see the tops of the Nantlle hills, the last bastions before the mountains recede into the sea. The railway track curves round the hillside

Just leaving Clogwyn Station. Llechog and Bwlch Gwynt in the centre of the picture and Nant Peris at the foot of Llanberis Pass below.





The view of Llanberis Pass from Clogwyn Station. The summit on the left is the Glyders.



Looking down at Clogwyn from the slopes above Clogwyn du'r Arddu. Llyn Padarn in the distance and the quarries and Elidir on the right.

towards a shallow depression in the North ridge. As we near this we can see over the ridge to the Glyders, Y Garn, Elidir and the top of the quarries. Beyond these we can just see the summits of the distant Carnedd range. Almost immediately we turn back to the right behind the ridge for the long climb up to Clogwyn Station. We now pass through the Valley of Rocks—an area of huge rounded blocks, piled haphazardly and severely shattered by frosts, strongly contrasting to the previous grassy slopes. As we pass through the Valley of Rocks the view over Bwlch Cwm Brwynog looks straight down the Nantlle valley, with the craggy profile of Craig y Bera on the flanks of Mynydd Mawr, defining the right-hand side of the valley.

As we come out of the Valley of the Rocks we must keep looking to the left. Suddenly the ridge on our left drops, from the peak of Llechog, to a small exposed col called Bwlch Gwynt—the windy pass. From here we have a totally unsuspected and most exciting view down into the Llanberis Pass. The first peak we see is the shapely mass of Moel Siabod and directly below its summit, at the head of the Pass is Gorphwysfa—once a famous hotel, but now a Youth Hostel. This unfortunately disappears from view almost immediately and it will take a quick pair of eyes to catch a glimpse of it. The slopes immediately below Bwlch Gwynt is known to the locals as Cwm Hetiau, the cwm of the hats, so called from the hats of travellers on the train, blown down into the cwm, when the carriages were open and exposed to the elements! In the foot of the valley, 2000 feet below, we can see the tiny ribbon of the road and the toy cars crawling up the valley. The scattered white farmhouses stand out well and at the foot of the Pass we can see Nant Peris, at the end of Llyn Peris, and the edge of the quarries. Whilst we have been enthralled by this spectacular view the train has climbed the rest of the slope and is near to Clogwyn Station, perched precariously on a small stony plateau on the very crest of the ridge. Whilst we are waiting for the down train there is time to examine the views more closely. In Nant Peris it is possible to pick out the ancient church and graveyard. Behind the church is the Saint's Well, which in olden times had a reputation as a healing agency. The well contained two sacred fishes whose business it was to signify by their presence that a cure would be wrought. Until recently two trout could still be found in the well, fed and watched over by the tenant of the adjacent cottage. Beyond Nant Peris we can see the edge of the quarry tips, which have encroached into the lake and across the hillside above. The 'levels' structure of the quarries can be well appreciated from this viewpoint—each level had a small railway running along its top, from the end of which the slate waste was tipped down the slopes below.

We are now almost level with the top of the cliffs of Clogwyn du'r Arddu and with luck you may be able to spot some climbers on the cliff. The sheer sweep of the rock and its impressive situation can be best appreciated from higher up the track, as it curves round above the cliffs. The main rock face is about 600 feet high and contains the largest collection of high quality difficult climbs in Britain. It is certainly the mecca for rock-climbers in Wales and on every weekend in the summer when the rocks are dry (not all that often, since the North-facing cliff is always in shadow) many climbers make their regular pilgrimage. Despite the difficulty of the climbs, there have been very few accidents on the cliff, probably because the seriousness of the climbing on it deters the less experienced climber. Indeed, many more accidents each year happen to walkers and scramblers in this area than to climbers. Because the paths up Snowdon and most of the other peaks are easy in fine weather they tend to be underestimated. In poor weather conditions it can be extremely cold and windy and if the path is lost there are many steep slopes and crags to trap the unwary. One of the problems of climbing on Cloggy is the noise from the trains as they chug up the mountain, which echoes and reverberates across the cwm long after the train has passed, making communication between the climbers almost impossible.

At the foot of the cliffs are the remains of some of the oldest copper mines on the mountain. The shafts are high on the broken slopes on the left of the cliffs and an incline leads down to the lake where the ore was washed. The remains of the barracks where the miners used to live can still be seen. They would spend all week on the mountain,

working whatever the weather, returning to the valley only on Sundays. The copper ore was carried down to the valley by the miners themselves and occasionally by hardy ponies. It is difficult to imagine much worse conditions under which to work!

CLOGWYN (2556 ft.) to SUMMIT (3493 ft.)

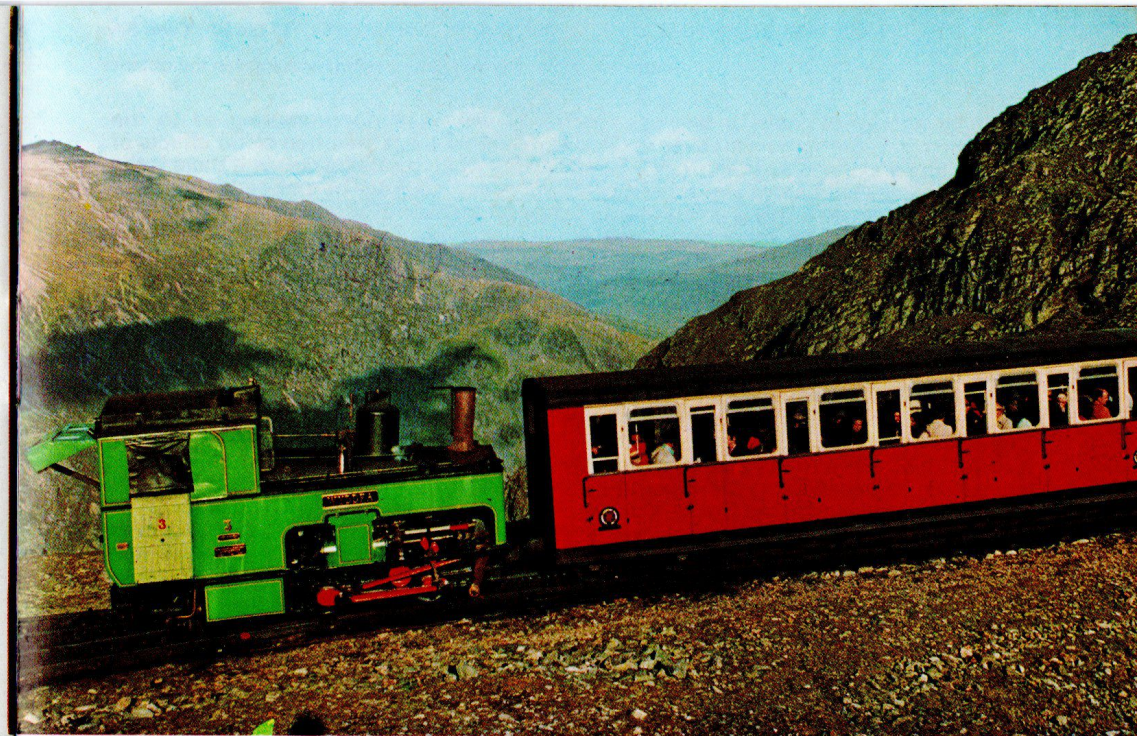
Above Clogwyn the railway curves round and across the steep wall of the mountain above Clogwyn du'r Arddu. The tourist path takes a parallel but higher line, rejoining the railway near the summit. As soon as we leave Clogwyn and cross the bridge over the tourist path, we see what is probably the finest view of 'Cloggy' and the lake below it. The steep sweeping lines of the cliff and its smooth profile give some idea of the quality of the climbing there. Many of the lakes in Snowdonia have legends attached to them, usually associated with some fearsome monster or ugly fishes. Llyn du'r Arddu was also supposed to have been a haunted lake, but here the dwellers were fairies and of a more agreeable kind. The little tarn under the frowning cliffs is associated with the unusual story of a fairy marriage alliance, sanctioned in this case by the fairy mother and father, but ending in disaster because the husband struck his fairy wife with an iron bride, contrary to the terms of the bargain concluded between them!

For most of the winter this section of the line is banked up with a solid mass of frozen snow, which often lasts until Easter. The broken and shattered rocks we see in the shallow cuttings are a powerful testimony to the eroding action of frost, continuing the process by which the whole of these mountains were carved out of a plateau during the great ice-age. The railway track now swings over to the right and we have a magnificent series of views back down the ridge, clearly showing the route of ascent, with Llanberis and its lakes in the distance and Anglesey stretching away into the haze. Nearing the top of the rise we can look steeply down at the profile of Cloggy and across at the crest of its Pinnacle with the aptly named 'Gargoyle'. We can also look directly down into the bottom of the cwm, with the old mine workings and buildings and the old miners' track, resurrected by the climbers, leading straight down towards Llanberis. Behind Cloggy there is a superb view *down* onto the summit of Moel Cynghorion.

As we break over the crest of the ridge and turn leftwards again towards the summit, the vista towards the South slowly unfolds. On a fine day this is most impressive, as for the first time we can see clearly what lies on the other side of the mountain. At first we see the peaks of Cwm Silyn and the Rivals, glimpses of which we have caught through the cols lower down, and then eventually we can see into the very bottom of the Cwellyn valley, with its numerous lakes—Llyn Cwellyn, the largest beneath Mynydd Mawr; Llyn y Ddywarchen and Llyn y Gadair to the left; and in the distance, at the foot of the Nantlle valley, Llyn Nantlle. Even from this height we cannot escape the ravages of man and the huge television mast behind Cwm Silyn proclaims itself prominently on the skyline. Behind Moel Hebog, almost due South, we can now pick out the coastline of the Portmadoc Estuary with the sun, if there is any, glittering on the sea beyond. Similarly we are now high enough to make out the coastline of Anglesey, with Caernarvon at the mouth of the Menai Straits.

We are now curving round to the left all the time, just below the summit of Crib y Ddysgl, with this wonderful panorama unfolding before us. Suddenly, directly ahead and deceptively near, we can see the actual summit of Snowdon. The round column on the top stands out clearly against the skyline, though on a good day it may be obscured by the crowds around it, and the roof of the hotel can just be made out on the skyline to the right. Below us on the right we can now see the cliffs of Llechog, with the three deep blue lakes in the cwm below it. On the gentle slopes above Cloggy, the Snowdon Ranger Path zig-zags up to join us near the summit.

As we pass along the final section of the ridge, we catch a brief glimpse of the splendours to come. We are almost on the crest of the ridge, but cannot quite see over it. Through a sudden break we can see the summit ridges of Crib y Ddysgl and Crib Goch, sharp and craggy, with Nant y Gwryd stretching away into the distance. The rounded summit of



Wyddfa at Clogwyn

Photo: Clive Friend FIIP, Woodmansterne Limited.

Crib y Ddysgl, which has dominated the skyline for much of the ascent, now seems insignificant as we gain height and pass above it. The terrain becomes very rocky, we pass through two small cuttings and arrive suddenly at the Summit terminus.

The journey is over, but in some respects the excitement has only just begun. Even from this building, nestling close under the summit we can appreciate the magnificent panorama. After the confines of the train it is a pleasure to scramble the final 60 feet or so to the very top—a small level platform with the white painted Ordnance Survey column. The summit of Snowdon, 3560 feet, the highest point in England and Wales!

THE SUMMIT (3560 ft.)

The actual summit of Snowdon is called, in Welsh, Yr Wyddfa. This means 'tomb' or 'Barrow' and reflects the old tradition that the giant Rhita Fawr, who was slain by Arthur, lies buried on the summit. The original cairn on the summit was supposed to have been the giant's before it was demolished and made into a sort of tower, which existed before the hotel was built.

There is rarely a day throughout the year when the summit is not visited by someone. On a recent Christmas Day over 100 people made the ascent, by foot of course, as the trains cannot run in winter, and were rewarded with a grand view and a fine red sunset. If the day is fine and the summit is thronged you can take some comfort from the knowledge that it has been like this for over 100 years!

The weather in Snowdonia has a bad reputation that it does not always deserve. If you

The view to the South-West, across Llechog and the Cwellyn valley. On the left, Cwm Silyn and on the right, Mynydd Mawr, with Llyn Nantlle in the distance.

are lucky enough to have a fine day, then you will need no prompting as to the magnificence of the views. But even in showery weather there are often cloud effects of great beauty and the atmosphere has a crystal clarity when the cloud clears. If there is the correct combination of mist and sunshine late in the day, you may be lucky enough to see the 'brocken spectre'. This is when the sun casts your shadow onto a bank of mist. The shadow appears to be huge and may be adorned with a rainbow of colours, or a collection of 'glories'—halo rings round the head. This is a rare sight, one which many frequenters of mountains have never seen. Another superb and unusual effect is when the valleys are filled with a sea of dense cloud and the atmosphere above is clear and brightly sunlit. On days such as this, only the highest of the surrounding peaks can be seen, like small islands in a huge sea of white foam.

Much of the view to the North and East we have seen already on the ascent, and you will already be familiar with many of the features. Looking beyond the Glyders to the North the summits of the Carnedd range can now be clearly seen. The two highest, Carnedd Daffydd and Carnedd Llywellyn are named after two of the more famous Welsh Princes. Perhaps the most striking part of the general view to the East is that we can now see behind the ridges of Crib y Ddysgl and Crib Goch into the impressive cwm below. The jagged narrow crest of Crib Goch—the red ridge—is most impressive. Deep in the cwm lies Llyn Llydaw, one of the largest lakes in the mountains, with its hydro-electric power pipes disappearing into the lower part of Cwm Dyli. Higher than Llydaw, and directly below the summit crags of Snowdon, lies the deep blue pool of Glaslyn. This can just be seen by peering over the very edge of the summit platform. These lakes owe their deep

Train arriving at the Summit Hotel, with a small crowd on the summit.



blue colour to the salts from the copper ores. The shores of these lakes have been the scene of the largest copper mine undertakings in the area, which were still being worked until the early 1900s. The vertical shafts of the workings can be seen just above Glaslyn. When the mines were originally opened there was no road over the Llanberis Pass and the ore was carried on the miners backs up the very steep zig-zag path to the crest of the ridge and then by horse-drawn sledge down the gentler grass slopes to Rhyd Ddu! Glaslyn, the Green Well, is supposed to be the receptacle of a fabulous monster, the *avangc*, which lived in a pool near Betws y Coed and was blamed for causing the floods in the Conway valley. The monster was dragged from its pool, secured by chains and hauled with great difficulty over the mountains to this place. On arrival at Glaslyn and to everyone's great relief, the monster promptly disappeared into the depths of the pool, never to be seen again!

Looking due South-East from the summit, we see the fine peak of Lliwedd, with its 1000 foot cliffs dominating the shores of Llydaw. To the right of Lliwedd, we can look down Cwm y Llan into the valley of Nantgwynant far below. Beyond Nantgwynant are the lower peaks of the Moelwyns and in the far distance, on the skyline, we can see the peaks of Merionethshire. The Arans are to the left and to the extreme right is Cader Idris, which overlooks the Barmouth Estuary. The area to the immediate south of Snowdon is steeped in folklore and particularly Arthurian legend. Near Beddgelert, at the foot of the valley, is the ancient fortress of Dinas Emrys, supposedly used by King Arthur and Merlin. His last battle is commemorated in the name of the rocky pass between Snowdon and Lliwedd—Bwlch y Saethau, 'the pass of arrows'. The legend is to the effect that King Arthur had vanquished his foes in the old city of Tregalan at the head of Cwm y Llan and then drove them over the pass into Cwm Dyli. When he reached the top of the pass, the enemy let fly a shower of arrows and Arthur was fatally wounded. After this battle at Bwlch y Saethau, Arthur's Knights went up onto the cliffs of Lliwedd and descended into a large cave. The cave immediately closed and the young men slept, resting on their shields, awaiting the second coming of the King.

Perhaps the finest views from the summit are to the South and East, particularly after a hot day when the outlines of the hills are softened by the haze and the ranges slowly disperse into the distant sea. To the North-West, Anglesey is stretched below like a map, with the profile of Holyhead Mountain (700 ft. high!) marking the last landfall. Beyond this it is sometimes possible to make out the Isle of Man and on rare occasions the distant coastline of Ireland.

DESCENT

Finally we have to tear ourselves away from the summit for the descent. If the weather is windy or cold, however, we may be only too glad to return to the comparative warmth and comfort of the train! On the descent, the views are much the same as on the ascent, though taken in the reverse order, of course. It is probably worth trying to obtain a seat on the opposite side of the train for the return journey, to try and see the things you may have missed. On rounding the shoulder above Clogwyn we are almost shocked by the exposure of the drop—on the ascent we gained height slowly and became used to the steepness. The changing light and stillness of the evening is reflected by our gradual return to the valley and civilisation, to be followed by the drive homewards with our memories of a splendid day and a unique experience.

Back Cover:

The view Eastwards across Llyn Llydaw. Crib Goch on the left. Moel Siabod on the right.

The two small lakes in the distance are Llynay Mymbyr, near Capel Curig.

